



**Opening Statement of
Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Confirmation Hearing for Dr. Condoleezza Rice
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
January 18, 2005**

Dr. Rice, welcome. I also want to welcome the new members – Senators Obama, Murkowski and Martinez – and welcome back a long-time member and good friend, Senator Kerry.

Dr. Rice, I congratulate you – and President Bush – on your nomination. I've enjoyed our frequent discussions over the past four years. I hope this will be the first of many visits by you to this Committee.

America faces two overriding national security challenges in this new century.

We must win the struggle between freedom and radical Islamic fundamentalism.

And we must keep the world's most dangerous weapons away from its most dangerous people.

To prevail, we must be strong. But we also must be smart... wielding the force of our ideas and ideals together with the force of our arms.

Today, after a necessary war in Afghanistan and an optional war in Iraq, we are rightly confident in the example of our power. But we have forgotten the power of our example.

Foreign policy is not a popularity contest. We must confront hard issues. Sometimes they require us to make hard choices that other countries don't like.

But above all they require American leadership – the kind that persuades others to follow. We've been having a tough time doing just that these past few years.

Clearly, we pay a price for being the world's sole superpower – we inspire as much envy and resentment as we do admiration and gratitude. But the fact is, relations with many of our

oldest friends are scraping the bottom of the barrel. As the 800-pound gorilla, we need to act with a little more grace in the global china shop.

In the Muslim world – despite the hundreds of thousands of Muslim lives we have helped save in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and yes, in Iraq -- Osama bin Laden has higher approval ratings than the United States.

The end result is that, despite our great military might, we are more alone in the world than we have been at any time in recent memory.

As a result, we are, in my view, less secure than we could or should be.

That's because virtually all of the threats we face – from terrorism... to the spread of weapons of mass destruction... to rogue states that flout the rules – cannot be met solely by unilateral force.

America is much more secure working with and reaching out to others than it is walking alone.

I believe the heart of your mission must be to help rebuild America's power to persuade...and to restore to our nation the respect it once enjoyed.

It will be very difficult to achieve any of this until we find a way forward in Iraq.

This Committee worked hard, across party lines, to support the President's decision to hold Saddam Hussein to account.

In return, we asked the administration to do two things: build a broad and deep international coalition... and develop a detailed plan to win the peace. The administration did neither. We're paying a heavy price for that now.

We also asked the administration to level with the American people about how hard and dangerous Iraq was going to be... how long it was going to take... how much it was going to cost.

The only people who leveled with us – like General Shinseki, who said it would take several hundred thousand troops to secure Iraq... and Economic Adviser Larry Lindsay, who said it would cost upward of \$200 billion – were shown the door.

Just last week, very quietly, the administration ended its search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq – the reason given for taking America to war. They found nothing.

And the National Intelligence Council – the CIA's think tank – concluded that Iraq has replaced Afghanistan as the training ground for the next generation of terrorists – something it was not before the war.

Despite all that, we now learn from the President that there is no reason to hold any administration officials accountable for mistakes and misjudgments in Iraq. According to the President, “we had an accountability moment and that’s called the 2004 elections.”

Dr. Rice, I hope that you, as Secretary of State, will demand accountability from the people who serve you if, heaven forbid, they *miss-serve* you to the extent our country has been *miss-served* in Iraq.

This is not about punishing people or embarrassing the President. It’s about learning from our mistakes so we don’t repeat them. A second term is also a second chance. I hope that you and the President seize it.

So I hope we can start leveling today. We’d like to hear how you see the road ahead in Iraq. What should the American people expect about *what* we can achieve, *when* we can hope to achieve it, and *how* we are going to succeed? I, for one, want to work with you toward that success.

Iraq is an overwhelming issue. This administration, like its predecessors, is only human. Every major problem winds up on the desk of the same handful of senior people – it’s not possible to give every challenge the attention it deserves.

And so it’s understandable that while you’ve focused on Iraq, other problems remained on the back burner. But now, some of those pots are boiling over, starting with the nuclear programs in North Korea and Iran... the dangerous backsliding on democracy in Russia... and genocide in Sudan.

Over the past few years, North Korea has increased its nuclear weapons capacity by as much as 400 percent. It may now have as many as 8 nuclear weapons which it could test, hide or sell to the highest bidder.

You have said it is “unacceptable” for North Korea to have nuclear weapons. What does that mean? And what do you propose we do to stop this growing threat?

Over the past few years, the reform movement in Iran has been crushed and the regime has accelerated its own nuclear program.

There may be nothing we can do to persuade Iran not to develop weapons. But our European allies are trying, through a combination of carrots and sticks. They believe they cannot succeed unless the United States engages in this effort. We’re sitting on the sidelines. What do you propose we do to defuse – or if necessary defeat – this emerging danger?

Over the past few years, President Putin has reversed the course of democratic development, human rights and the rule of law in Russia.

The administration has been largely silent. How can we be so concerned about the advancement of democracy in the Middle East and so unconcerned about the regression in Russia?

At the same time, we've gotten little in return for turning a blind eye to Russia's regression. Just last week, the press reported that Russia is about to sell new missiles to Syria, which would threaten stability and progress toward peace in the Middle East.

One of the most important programs to protect America's security – the effort to help Russia account for, secure and destroy weapons of mass destruction and related materials – has become mired in red tape that the two Presidents need to cut through. How are you going to approach these problems as Secretary of State?

Finally, the administration has done an admirable job promoting peace between the North and South in Sudan. But in Darfur, we have watched a terrible tragedy unfold, as militia supported by the Sudanese government have killed as many as 100,000 civilians and chased as many as 2 million from their homes.

Four months ago, before this Committee, Secretary Powell rightly called it genocide. Since then, the situation has gotten even worse. What do you believe the administration and Congress can do, now, to stop this slaughter and to help African allies develop their own peacekeeping capacity.

There is much, much more to talk about. Relations with emerging powers like China... fault line friends like India and Pakistan... long time allies in Europe and Asia... and, closer to home, a troubled but ignored Latin America.

We will want to hear your thoughts about bolstering our capacity to handle post conflict reconstruction. Chairman Lugar drafted important legislation to do just that, which I was pleased to co-sponsor. I hope you will support it.

And I intend to ask you about a source of urgent opportunity: the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Abu Mazen's election may provide a rare second chance to forge a lasting, secure peace for Israel and to give the Palestinians a state of their own. What do you believe we should do to seize this opportunity?

But let me end with something you've talked about – and that I hope you will elaborate on today: putting diplomacy back at the center of America's foreign policy.

I strongly agree that this is the time for a new diplomatic offensive with old allies... rising powers... and even hostile regimes. But it has to be sustained. It has to be persistent. It has to do as much listening as it does talking.

And it has to use all the tools at our disposal – our military might... *but also* our intelligence... our public diplomacy... our alliances... international organizations... treaties and

agreements... development assistance... trade and investment – even if it can be frustrating and even if the pay-off takes years, even a generation.

That's what we did after World War II. That's why we prevailed in the Cold War.

Now, faced with a new but no less dangerous set of challenges, we must recapture the totality of America's strength.

Above all, we must understand that those who spread radical Islamic fundamentalism and weapons of mass destruction are beyond the reach of reason.

We must – and we will – defeat them.

But hundreds of millions of hearts and minds around the world are open to American ideas and ideals.

We must reach them.

I look forward to working with you to do just that.